



State Rehabilitation Council

Nebraska Department of Education
301 Centennial Mall South • PO Box 94987 • Lincoln, NE 68509
Country Inn & Suites
5353 North 27th
Lincoln, NE
December 5, 2006
10:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m.

Public notice of upcoming meetings will be available on the Department of Education website under “conferences & meetings” as least 5 days prior to each meeting.

Present: *Debra Bauer, Sharon Bloechle, Don Crouch, Linda Douglas, Alvin Fox, Gayle Hahn, Sandy Ham, Les Kimmons, Frank Lloyd, Larry Niemeyer, Kipp Ransom, Vicki Rasmussen, Mark Schultz, Pearl Van Zandt, Merwyn Vavrina, and Terry Lee Wilson*

Absent: *Marc Hultine, Jason Kerkman, and Michael Newman*

Minutes by *Cheryle Adams*

Gayle Hahn called the meeting to order

I Public Comment/Announcements:

Gayle noted that Kim Boyce has missed the last several meetings. She has tried to contact him several times but he has not returned her phone call. He will be notified as to his dismissal from the council.

Don discussed amending the operational procedures. He mentioned that the council can no longer do voice votes. Official votes will be taken by roll call if there are objections. We can do unanimous/general consent votes. For non controversial motions the chair will ask up front if there are any objections to the motion, if none an unanimous vote will be taken and recorded

Don also mentioned that the agenda can no longer be revised during the meeting, unless it is an emergency item.

Gayle brought before the council information about the two individuals whom are interested in becoming a part of the Council. They interviewed Anna Harpster from Kearney. She is the Counseling Chair at University of Nebraska at Kearney. She is very interested in Brain Injury. She was employed by Goodwill as the Program Manager for Community Support.

The committee also interviewed Jay Ice. Jay experiences a disability and currently lives in Cozad. He moved to Nebraska from Indiana and was a consumer of VR. He has a computer business that he operates out of his home.

The Executive Committee decided to add both to council membership and their recommendation will go to the State Board.

The third one Katie Durfee is from Fairbury and will be interviewed on the 20th. She also experiences a disability.

II. Approval of Agenda

Motion made by Alvin to approve the agenda. The agenda has been accepted by unanimous consent.

III. Approval of minutes from October 10, 2006

Motion made by Les to approve the October 10th minutes. The minutes have been accepted by unanimous consent.

IV Director's Report (*Frank Lloyd*)

1. ***Interpreter Mentoring Program:*** Voc Rehab is providing funds to support a 12 month mentoring program recently developed by the Commission for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing. The mentoring Interpreters Across Nebraska Project has 9 protégés and 7 mentors in its first mentoring group. This first cycle ends January 30th. The cycle will end with evaluations to measure the increase in the interpreting skills of the protégés. Rayne Kaika, Mentoring Program Coordinator is recruiting protégés for the next cycle. The goal is to recruit more protégés from outside of the Lincoln and Omaha area.
2. ***Interpreter scheduling database:*** Voc Rehab is providing funds to help the Commission for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing develop a web-enabled database to schedule interpreters throughout the state. This project was delayed while awaiting approval by the Department of Administrative Services allowing the Commission for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing to accept the VR grant. The contract was signed in November and the contractor, Advantage Computer Systems, has started the project. The target date for project completion is 4-15-07 with final acceptance by 5-1-07. By the end of December, ACS will have completed the web site design and be ready to implement several phases of testing the system on a development host and production host before moving to the live system.
3. ***Interpreter Signing Via Video Link:*** The video link schedule has been offered at two 2-hour blocks per week. The usage has been light. We will also offer staff the opportunity to telephone the interpreter to arrange more convenient times. This may give us a better idea of how to set-up standard scheduling in the future.
4. ***Consumer Service Pamphlets*** Voc Rehab is writing a series of consumer service pamphlets to emphasize services directly available from VR staff. The final three pamphlets have completed layout. All six have been edited and they will be going to the printer soon.

Sandy distributed drafts of the final three. These highlight the direct services provided by VR staff. VR wants to be in the position of providing staff services to people, even if we don't have money to pay for cost services. VR wants to avoid what is happening in other states—people waiting on lists. The VR's are unable to provide the direct services as need they are to provide service to those that are first in line before the one behind is served.

This series is a way to inform the consumer that these are directly available from staff at no cost to them. There are a total of six programs. If the council has any suggestions as to changes; contact Sandy. These will be prominently displayed in the offices for consumers.

The first three are:

Don't settle for just another job! Pick the job that is best for you.
Want to Work? But, you fear losing your Social Security benefits?
Expand your job search and career possibilities

The "Making It Work" publication is at the printer and will be going out soon. This is mostly about the ATP/VR partnership.

5. ***State Rehab Council Annual Report*** The report is now in the layout stage.

Resume Workbook The recently redesigned resume workbook has been received from the print shop and distributed to the Voc Rehab offices. Sandy will provide a copy to Council members at the upcoming SRC Meeting.

The look is fresher, a more up-to-date viewpoint. A nicer more polished look. There has been more focus on electronic resumes,

6. ***Transition Materials*** Voc Rehab will be designing a "transition folder" for use at job fairs, IEP meetings and use at the school. A transition poster will also be developed with a similar "look" to tie into the transition folder and other transition materials. The poster would be available to post in schools such as in the school counselor's office.
7. ***Transition Parent Packet*** Information packets are sent to parents/guardians of students with disabilities when their application for transition services is entered into QUEST. More than 500 packets were sent for new transition applicants in October and early November. Our staff has been busy! This reflects our emphasis during the past year on working with transition students as young as age 14.
8. ***CSAVR Futures Update:*** The Counsel of State Administrator for Vocational Rehabilitation have been holding national stakeholder meetings to develop a vision for Voc Rehab that will create a long-term agenda for change.

I believe the most important of the Futures issues for Nebraska Rehab is: *Should VR agencies be allowed to provide no-cost services to individuals who are not on a priority list to be served, under Order of Selection OOS?* We will be developing a short position paper of this issue to present at the next SRC meeting [February 13, 2007]. The information will also be presented to all the State VR Directors at the December 12, 2006 Region VII State Director's meeting in Kansas City. You will have the benefit of their input at the next SRC meeting.

9. ***Employment Warranty Monitoring Update:*** We are starting a pilot project to provide Employment Warranty Monitoring through a central person who will be under contract with Voc Rehab. This project has been delayed due to the programming challenges of exporting essential data and the monitoring script to the Monitor and importing the results of the monitoring activity. The challenges have been addressed and this project will go live the first part of December.
10. ***Lincoln Office Move:*** The bids were evaluated and it was decided that we would stay at our current 48th Street location. Cost, location, public transportation and an inability to

significantly improve our office floor plan were all factors in making the decision to stay at our current location.

Omaha Office—VR will be moving 1/3 of the staff from the Omaha downtown office to 120th and Q. They will share this with HHS. VR will be on the side street, lower level. VR needs to have a presence in western Omaha, where parents and students will be better able to stop in to discuss services. VR will also be able to serve those people with disabilities coming from HHS and welfare. Melanee Petersen will be the Area Administrator and will supervise the west office.

11. **Trademarks** Nebraska Voc Rehab holds the following Trademarks: “Quality Employment Solutions” and “Employment Warranty”. We are in the process of registering three additional trademarks: “We’ve got the solution” a general statement emphasizing our staff services; “There’s a job in your future” a tagline for our message to students with disabilities; and “Personal Business Solutions” a possible marketing tagline to the business community. We are not sure if the taglines will pass final registration. In our initial search we could not find them being “used in commerce.”
12. **Quality Employment Solutions®** Newsletter The newsletter will be receiving a face-lift. The new layout is expected by the end of December.
13. **Madonna Partnership Update:** The Madonna Partnership is part of our effort to reach underserved populations who experience a physical disability. The VR team working with the Madonna Partnership now includes three VR Specialists. As the Partnership is expanded into the various Madonna Programs, primary liaison contacts from these three VR staff will be assigned. Nine referrals have been made since the start of the fiscal year [October 1st] bringing the total referrals to 34.
14. **Multimedia Projects Update:** Kelli Funk, multimedia specialist with Voc Rehab is currently providing DVD’s to all VR offices of presenters from the Annual State VR Staff Training. The DVD’s include a session on: Autism, Basics of ADA, Immigration law and VR consumers, Generational characteristics and how they effect consumers in the workplace, and Assessment of intelligence using the WAIS. Projects currently in development include: Consumer Orientation that will be available to consumers through video streaming over our external web site, Overview of the Assistive Technology Program for new staff, and Computer Basic Training for new staff.
15. **National VR Business Network Update:** Jim Coyle is our “point of contact” for the National VR Business Network. The Region VII State Director’s meeting December 12, 2006 will focus on the coordination of the National VR Business Network in Region VII [Nebraska, Iowa, Kansas and Missouri]. Placement staff in Region VII is planning a Region VII Employment Conference for July 2007 in Kansas City. The National network will be called The NET [National Employment Team] CSAVR is currently Trade Marking the name: The NET.

Walgreen’s is building multiple Distribution Centers throughout the country. People with disabilities will fill about 30% of the jobs in the centers. The Senior VP of Distribution is committed to hiring people with disabilities. His son experiences autism. We will be following all the new development of The NET and will provide you more information in future SRC meetings.

16. ***New Staff Training Update:*** The New Staff Training Committee is developing a sequence of training activities that can be completed in the local office. These will complement classroom training that we will continue to offer new staff. The New Staff Training Modules and Tools were posted to the Vocational Rehabilitation Information System [VRIS] at the end of October. There are currently 8 modules covering Outreach, Referral and Orientation, Employment Discussion, Application, Eligibility, Ineligibility and Priority, Individual Plan for Employment, On-the-Job evaluation and On-the-Job training, Post Secondary Training, Job Seeking Skills, Employment Services and 12 Training Tools that include Streaming Video/DVD, Activities and Worksheets support these modules.

A New Staff Training Portfolio has also been introduced. The Portfolio is maintained by the new employee and contains the following items: 1. Critical Skills Checklist, Job description and copies of Performance Appraisals; 2. The New Staff Training Schedule and copies of Training Work Plans; 3. Training Modules and Tools Used; 4. Employment and Job Planning Discussion Evaluation Worksheets completed by Program Staff, Program Directors, Area Administrators and VR Senior Rehab Specialists. 5. Program Director and Office Director Training Summaries,

Additional Training Modules and Activities are in the development stage.

17. ***Placement Committee Update:*** The Job Seeking Skills training booklet has a new look. Sandy Ham will give a copy to each Council member at the upcoming SRC meeting. The Placement Committee has finalized standards for all placement activities and incorporated them into the Employment Services Chapter on VRIS [Vocational Rehabilitation Information System on the VR internal web site.] The standards include: a 90-day review of the placement plan, Job Seeking Skills services for all consumers, report of placement staff weekly business contacts at each Team Meeting, among other standards.
18. ***TeamMates:*** Voc Rehab staff is being offered an opportunity to serve as a TeamMate mentor for students with disabilities. An official announcement will go out to staff in December outlining the selection criteria that Voc Rehab will be using to determine which staff will be sponsored. The initial sponsorships will probably be made in January 2007 after staff has had an opportunity to consider if they are interested in making a commitment to mentoring a student with a disability.
19. ***VR Staff Meeting:*** Twice a year Margy and I meet with each of the Employment Teams. In the spring we tour the state and meet with each team separately. In the fall, Mel Bargas [HR Administrator for Voc Rehab] joins us and we meet with each staff person privately and discuss issues of concern to the agency as well as the staff person. All of the meetings will be concluded in the next few weeks. This has been an important event to give local staff an opportunity to let us know about their concerns and questions.
20. ***ATP/Transition Services.*** VR has provided money to ATP to hire another staff person to work in the schools. ATP is finding that the classroom teachers are not aware of the assistive technology devices that are available to assist students. VR will eventually be involved if the student is referred to ATP.
21. ***Goodwill & Cirrus House.*** The new funding agreement will start July 1. This is a significant commitment as VR has given over 1.3 million over the last three years. People with severe persistent mental illness are generally on SSDI and Medicaid, but are not able

to get full time jobs thus unable to get medical coverage. As VR looks to the future it is possible that funds could be limited for case services. The 1.3 million dollars will help serve those with TBI, soldiers coming back from Iraq, and others that have sustained brain injuries. There is a great need in this area. VR can't continue to fund mental health programs and will have to back away. VR will continue the funding for another year, but are looking at other groups that have needs for funding and services.

Another area is working with the area hospitals that have patients with severe pain. Looking at ways VR can assist in this area.

22. **Reauthorization.** VR still has not received reauthorization and has been trying to get this passed for the last four years. Frank will provide more information at the next meeting. VR has a new RSA liaison—Rose Ann Ashby. She is very knowledgeable. This will be Nebraska VR's third one.
23. **Youth Leadership Council.** Special Education and VR want to fund and support a youth leadership council. This would involve students from schools around the state. This will need to be approved by the State Board of Education and will give student with disabilities some authority to make decisions. They will be attached to both SPED and SRC councils. SRC will have some contact with this council. VR hopes that these students will become involved later, taking leadership roles on other councils as they become older.
24. **Biennium Funding Exercise.** This is an exercise as to where to cut funds and the impact on the VR program. Frank is concerned as to where this exercise may go this year. The State Board is talking about cutting \$350,000 in state funds from VR's budget. State funds are matching funds for the federal money and could translate in a loss of over 1.5 million. The State Board of Education doesn't understand the money match and that in order to receive federal monies the states have to match with state funds.

Frank will draft an email from the council to be sent to the Commissioner of Education sharing VR's concerns about the proposed funding cuts. This will be attached to the budget request and then shared with the State Board of Education.

The council discussed sending an email to the Commissioner asking for permission to contact legislators concerning the funding cuts. The letter would help educate/provide information to the state senators concerning the state funding and how that is needed to received the federal match and the potential loss of 1.5 million dollars.

Motion made by Sharon: "Council supports maintaining full funding for VR. This includes communication to be sent to the Commissioner of Education outlining the reasons why the funding is important and request guidance from the Commissioner on communicating with the state senators on the issue of funding.

Pearl seconded the motion.

Roll call vote was taken and recorded. The motion has been accepted by unanimous consent. Nonvoting members in attendance were: Frank Lloyd and Don Crouch.

V. Old Business

A. None

VI. New Business

A. TBI Update (*Keri Bennett*)

Keri Bennett currently heads up TBI project and presented information on this to the council a year ago. Keri shared some of the things that are going on in VR as a result of the employment pilots and the direction this is headed next year.

The project started in July of 2005 and is on a three year grant with renewal of funding each year.

Developmental Services of Nebraska (DSN) is currently serving 15 people with acquired brain injury. Three of them are working part time in the community. Jo Kelly, DSN's pilot coordinator, has helped to design the basic ABI training specifically for DSN staff and it has been well received. DSN is using Person-Center Mapping methods to help their pilot participants begin exploring their goals for work and they have recently hired a job coach for ABI consumers. Last June several DSN staff went to Wyoming to visit the Rocky Mountain ReEntry Services, touring the residential and vocational sites. Funding for this was provided by federal TBI funds.

Goodwill Industries of Greater Nebraska now has three full time staff for their pilot; a Director and two full time job coaches. There are 12 people currently in active services ready to transition to employment. Four of them are working and receiving support from Goodwill. Several other pilot participants are volunteering and/or completing on-the-job evaluations with support, exploring their interests and abilities prior to seeking competitive employment.

The goal is to take some referrals from VR and provide seamless transition for those consumers that are going from hospital/rehabilitation to competitive employment.

This last June, Goodwill honored VR/Department of Education and Health and Human Services with the "Innovation Award" for their pilots. There is a great need to expand this program into the western part of the state. .

VR has an agreement with DSN and Goodwill for data collection and outcome measures. They are to report quarterly to VR for the next two years. This will yield data that my help VR develop future funding resources and inspire better collaboration with state agencies who are already serving people with brain injuries.

Keri interviewed three DSN pilot participants and job shadowed two of them at their worksites. The two questions she is asking them is: 1) "How have you grown since you've been involved in the pilot?" and 2) "What do you want people to know about brain injury?" She feels self-employment might be the niche for some of these people and is interested in exploring the area of self-employment.

October 1, 2006 VR began piloting the use of the HELPS, an acquired brain injury screening device in four offices: Grand Island, Kearney, Scottsbluff and Norfolk. VR

staff are using this instrument during the Employment Discussion at the time of application. This is a questionnaire consisting of five questions to help identify the possibility to a brain injury.

- H: Have you ever hit your head or been hit on the head?
- E: Were you ever seen in the emergency room, hospital or seen by a doctor because of an injury to your head?
- L: Did you ever lose consciousness or experience a period of being dazed and confused because of an injury to your head?
- P: Do you experience any of these problems in your daily life since you hit your head?
- S: Any significant sickness?

This doesn't diagnose brain injury, but can possibly identify it as a possibility. This is being piloted by some of the counselors in the VR offices (Norfolk, Kearney, Grand Island, and Scottsbluff) as part of the employment discussion. When three items are identified it is considered a positive for a possible TBI. 35% of the applicants screened in GI screened positive

VR purchased the Perceptual memory Task assessment (PMT) for each VR office and for the Goodwill ABI Pilot to use in vocational assessment. This assesses fundamental information processing skills that are essential for learning and performance. In October staff were trained in how to use the PMT. Keri has also recommend that staff consider administering the PMT with someone who screens positive on the HELPS and prior to referring for neuropsychological assessment. It is also a useful tool for assessing other cognitive disabilities.

Populations that are not being served are soldiers coming back from Iraq, national guards, etc. These projects will give insight of what needs to be done in the community to help them go back to work.

Next year Keri plans on working on a suggested brain injury protocol. Everything will be posted to VRIS. Staff will find policy information, manuals and tools posted there. It is a live document; meaning when things/information changes in the field of brain injury, the protocols will be updated. Listed in the protocol will be 1) what to do with positive screen 2) how to communicate with person 3) information about neuropsychological evaluations 4) help in understanding the cognitive deficiencies that are barriers for employment, 5) successful job matching, etc, .

VR is would like to start another project/pilot in the area of pain management. VR is working with the medical community and the populations that can't work due to the pain management issue. Manage the pain, then they are able to work. For more information Keri can be reached in Kearney at 308-865-5012 or toll free 800-262-3382.

B. New Staff Training Presentation (*Larry Niemeyer*)

The New Staff Training Modules and Tools were posted to the VRIS at the end of October. Pat Bracken, Melanee Petersen, Larry Niemeyer and Sandy Ham were part of

the team designing the eight training modules. The goal is to provide uniform training for new staff. There are many things a new staff member needs to know and there have been problems with consistency throughout the state. As a result VR has developed the “Training Portfolio.” Larry distributed this to council members for review. Each new specialist will get one and they are to put in it the things that are important to them in learning the job such as job description, local office work plans, performance appraisal, training modules, etc. The supervisor and new staff member will sit down and review the portfolio checking to see what area has been missed and where the focus needs to be. Having this information on VRIS allows staff to access this giving them information on how to use the portfolio. It also has information as to what training activities are available, listing of all of the training modules.

Larry distributed to council members the “Instructions For VR Training Modules.” He also distributed the module on—Benefits Orientation and Analysis—note that on the back page are activities that a manager can assign an individual to complete within the first two weeks. Together the manager and new staff member will sit down with the portfolio and select the modules and activities for the new staff person to work on. It’s an organizational tool to help direct a new person along as well as considering with the other training they will receive.

New staff will view the “Director’s Welcome to New Staff” using the video that Kelli Funk developed of Frank’s new staff welcome. Kelli will be developing more videos that will support the new staff training.

The committee is working on several other training modules and will go to the managers that are using the system weeding out those things that are working and not working. Eventually there will be training modules that will be developed for Associates. The VR office managers recognize this as an organizational tool.

C. Update Commission Hearing Impaired (*Tanya Wendel*)

Tanya Wendel from the Commission for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing updated the council on interpreters. They are a state agency serving the deaf and hard of hearing people in Nebraska. She stated that they have received funding for a mentoring project and have established a referral interpreter system that is web based and is hooking up with independent companies switching to video replay interpreting. They will work hand in hand with them as a secondary source.

Tanya distributed the “License Explanatory Statement”. She stated that there is a great need for licensed interpreters. New regulations have been passed concerning licensing requirements and levels of competency. The commission has worked on creating this mentoring project MIAN (Mentoring Interpreters Across Nebraska) for the last four years. CEU units were added as a standard to maintain the professional level. The sponsors are Nebraska Commission for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing, Nebraska Department of Vocational Education, Metropolitan Community College, Midwest Center for Post Secondary Outreach and Nebraska Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf.

Anyone interested in taking part of the MIAN program, will need to fill out and submit an application to the Mentor Program Coordinator at the NCDHH. The MIAN program will establish partnerships by matching Lead Mentor or Deaf Language Mentor strengths with protégées depending upon the areas for desired skill development. All of our mentors go through a training process provided by a master mentor. The protégé will also be required to attend training and orientation before the mentoring cycle begins. The mentoring cycle will be a period of 3 months. The protégé will complete a pre-assessment to determine skill level and area of concentration. Both the protégé and the mentor will be required to log 20 hours of mentoring activities. If you are enrolled in the MIAN residency program you will also complete 10 hours of on-the-job training (interpreting in the community) with a Lead Mentor.

Pat Bracken was on the original licensing board. He was concerned about rural areas of the state. How do we get people with minimum level competency to work for VR? There are no interpreter training programs west of Lincoln. They have opted to hire a coordinator who is also deaf. She started the first group of protégés working with a mentor. They spend over 20 hours in a three-month period working on socialization, weekly news, etc. The Commission is helping with the training costs and the cost of the test. Individuals can apply for a scholarship.

There are several concerns about interpreters in the rural areas. Most may not work more than 30 hours per year. It costs \$150 for the two year generalized license. The impact is that people won't want to get their license, as they can't make a living. There is generally a two-hour minimum with a cost of \$30 - \$50 per hour. They are working on linking people up through video coordination.

Individuals can access the website www.nol.org/home/NCDHH to view the draft that has been submitted outlining the administrative procedures and the fees. The new law states that the state will use licensed interpreters. It is recommended that every state agency contact the commission with their needs. They will publish a registry and identify the settings that the individual interpreter can work in. The registry and information on levels of competency will be on the website.

The Commission is also working on creating an interpreter referral database. People needing interpreters can answer a few questions outlining their needs. This will then link then up with interpreters that would be suitable. They are currently working with someone to design the database and the queries. The prototype should be ready by the end of February. After testing is completed, the site should be available sometime this next summer.

D. Amend Operational Procedures (*Gayle Hahn/Don Crouch*)

Don mentioned that the NDE Department attorney made him aware of the need to comply with the Nebraska open meetings law. He noted that in the back of the room is a copy of the open meeting laws for the public to review. Don distributed the draft. He cleaned up a few things and any changes will be identified by a bar on the right hand side.

Section II C. #5 took out the last sentence.

Section II D #3c added “or in emergency matters requiring immediate attention.”

Section IV A #5 added wording “the proposed agenda and minutes of the previous meeting” and shall “be sent”

Section IV C #3 moved to A #6

Section IV A #6 moved to A #7

Section IV A #7 moved to A #8

Section IV C #7 moved to A #9

Section IV C #8 moved to A #10

Section IV C #6 wording changed from “voice” to “roll call”

Section IV D #1 wording changed from “in a newspaper of general circulation within the State of Nebraska at least 10 days prior to each meeting of the Council” to “on the Department of Education web page under ‘conference & meetings’ at least five (5) days prior to each meeting of the Council.”

Next meeting date February 13, 2007 is when the changes can be approved. As a member, if there is anything else that needs to be changed will need to be brought up at the next meeting during the motion.

Working Lunch (12:30 p.m. - 1:00 p.m.) Committee Meetings will start at 12:45

VII. Reports

A. CAP Report (*Vicki Rasmussen*)

The CAP annual report is due at the end of month. There are three issues that are being reviewed this year. 1) How consumers are informed about the six-day requirement in completing the financial plan for post secondary education. Vic is working with Pat Bracken on this. They are creating a video for those that have expressed interested in going to a post secondary school. 2) Defining “Exceptions” what does that mean? 3) Purchase of vehicles.

B. SILC Report (*Alvin Fox*) No report

C. ATP Report (*Mark Schultz*)

As of November 1st there has been a change in the process of delivering assistive technology services and VR’s involvement. ATP is totally involved from the beginning to the end. In the first 17 days of following the new policy ATP has had 34 VR referrals. They were getting referrals for some simple AT things, i.e., eyewear. VR staff can authorize for those from noted professionals, but ATP till wants to be aware and feels that there might be other technology that could assist them. They are struggling

getting staff through the initial process, but in the long run this will help everyone involved.

ATP has assigned two individuals to work in area of transition. Angela Smith is covering the tri-city area, and Bill Zabel is covering the Omaha area. They are going out and meeting with employers on how assistive technology might benefit them and their employees. Bill and Angela are also working on strategies of how assistive technology might benefit students in school as they transition to work. Schools are good about implementing strategies, but they don't typically work with ATP on the transitioning from school to work.

ATP has created a recycling website called AT4ALL. They are training VR staff on how to list equipment and to use this system as a resource. VR will use it to let consumers know what equipment is available. This is part of what is hoped to be a national website for tracking equipment. AT4ALL will be offered (via the national Pass It On Project website) to states that don't have anything developed as yet. South Dakota, Wyoming, Arkansas, and Georgia will be the first states to use Nebraska's AT4ALL.

ATP has been working with Jim Coyle to develop a brochure and a marketing plan that will promote Assistive Technology Services to employers and employees that are in the workplace but are not VR clients.

Don mentioned that staff are really pleased with the housing website. 17 States are currently using the system and ATP will be making a real push to Omaha landlords to expand listings in the Omaha area this next year.

D. Committee Reports

1. Client Services Committee (*Les Kimmons*)

The committee met and discussed the survey instrument concerning the IPE booklet. The committee is pleased with the changes made to the booklet. The committee felt the survey instrument met the purpose and the administrative and staff needs as well as provided a couple of positive things. One result is that case reviews are now being done by team reviews with members sitting in with supervisors and also, sitting in with staff on a 1 to 1 basis. Individualization of services is another result. Administration felt that, whoever uses the notebook, staff is working with the individual on an individualized basis. They found that a few were not aware of the booklet and were not using it. The importance of using the booklet...needs to be emphasized.

Don clarified individualization, it's an "approach" issue...treating each person as they need to be treated and they complete the booklet. There are some exceptions being outlined depending on what the person needs. If a consumer walks in the door and does not have clear employment goals, this helps. If they already have goals and know what they want to do, the approach would be different. They would still use the notebook, skipping certain pages depending on the consumer's knowledge. VR will continue working, refining the booklet as staff become familiar with the booklet and are more comfortable using the booklet.

Frank is pleased with the staff response on the booklet and feels this will help establish consistency/best practice.

2. Employer Services Committee (*Jim Coyle*)

Eileen met with legislators to tell how VR helped her in becoming self-employed. Through the help of VR she took out a VREP loan to start her own business.

The committee discussed VR's approach to businesses, being more unified across the nation. How to market to employers, trying to bring employers on board then the consumers. Focusing more on filling state agency position with VR consumers. The committee plans to meet with Frank and Margy on this issue, then will visit with staff across the state getting their feedback.

For the past 6 months ATP has been piloting a program—outreaching to employers. They have been targeting the tri-city area—Kearney, Hastings and Grand Island. A brochure that will be given to area employers was distributed to the committee. Staff will go out and just drop these off to employers, keeping a list of where they are placed.

The goal is to having employers make referrals to ATP for assistance with employees who are injured/disabled. They are trying to focus on those employees that are having difficulties in the workplace. Giving employers access to assistive technologies and helping them to come up with ideas/strategies on how to keep those employees in the workplace. The company will be more successful if they can keep those skilled employees in that job. This is program is supported by VR. Those individuals that require additional services can then be supported by VR.

This is a free benefit to employers. The advantage is that ATP/VR is targeting a group of people who are experiencing a disability and probably don't know about VR/ATP services, and just need some help to stay in their job. This will bring a different type of consumer through the door. This is a free service to consumers, doesn't matter what their income is. They tried not to use the word disability in the brochure as the people they are targeting don't think of themselves as having a disability, yet they are eligible for the program.

Larry Neimeyer requested that the program also be piloted in his area (Columbus).

The committee has been reviewing legislation that Oklahoma passed—that state agencies can hire people with disabilities on a two year temporary basis that won't count against their Limit on number of employees. The agency still pays the consumer. This puts disabled people working in temporary positions, then when the position is open the consumer may be able to fill the position as they have been trained.

They are looking for someone to sponsor this, possibly Senator Howard. The committee believes that the consumer should accumulate time in terms of state employment, accrue vacation, sick leave and participate in the retirement program. They also want to make sure they fall under the union agreement and are eligible for health benefits.

Pearl made the motion that the council support the concept of developing legislation that will increase opportunities for employment of persons with disabilities with state government.

Mark seconded the motion. The motion has been accepted by unanimous consent.

3. Transition Services Committee (*Jack*)

The committee requested the council's approval to do the finish work/revisions on the survey then to mail out to the schools the middle part of January or February. They would like to start getting feedback by February 11th. There are 11 questions. Questions 8-9 & 10 are open-ended questions and it was decided that they will work on some actual responses so that school folks can just select a box. They felt this would help increase the chance of having the survey returned. They have targeted around 300 people to mail the survey to as well as sending it out electronically. A cover letter will be prepared to explain the survey.

They are still working on the design of the survey to make it more appealing. The results of the survey will be recommendations for the 2008 year. This will hopefully provide some unity for the transition program.

Alvin Fox made motion: Requesting that the Council approve the finalization of the survey then to proceed with mailing it out.

Pearl seconded. Motion carried with unanimous consent.

Jack also mentioned that he is working with the Youth Rehabilitation Training Centers in Kearney and York. He is working with the liaison from each office to provide continuity when the student leaves the facility. To help them make the right kinds of connections when they return home.

Meeting adjourned.